



HEALTH MOBILITY

Moving to Inclusion



Healthy cities consist of many components.

In a city that supports health for all people, diversity is celebrated and everyone belongs. People are safe and have a strong sense of community, children flourish in caring families and schools, neighbourhoods are designed with access to affordable, healthy food and transportation choices, and nearly everyone reaches their full physical and mental health.

To achieve this vision, communities must support the health of all people, with a particular focus on those who experience poor health.

Previous columns have discussed how the built environment can support health and influence how physically active we are – things like how our neighbourhoods are designed, what the streetscape looks like, how far it is to destinations, and the type and quality of bike infrastructure. If done right, these factors can help us fit physical activity into our daily lives.

But some of these approaches focus primarily on increasing physical activity in people without mobility barriers. Street design and transportation networks that do not take into consideration the needs of all users can exclude people, reducing transportation choices, feelings of belonging, and limiting social interactions.

To ensure equitable access to the benefits of a healthy community, transportation options must accommodate all users of all abilities. More than one in 10 Canadian adults experience a disability such as pain or limited mobility or flexibility that limits their daily activities. As people age, this rate goes up, with 22 per cent of those aged 65 to 74 and almost half of all people over age 75 experiencing physical limitations. This has a large impact on the health of our community, as 50 per cent of adults with a disability get no aerobic physical activity. Adults with a disability are also three times more likely to have a chronic disease.

Mobility barriers are not limited to people with disabilities; we can all experience temporary mobility limitations. Families with children in strollers, women who are pregnant, or people who need to walk and carry groceries or other large loads may struggle to get where they need to go easily and enjoyably.

We encourage people to walk or use active transportation whenever possible, so it is important to reduce barriers wherever they exist.

One way to do this is to incorporate the concept of universal design when creating environments such as



MOBILITY IN WINTER

If you look outside your window, you will see another barrier to mobility – snow! Winter weather conditions make mobility even more difficult. There is limited research about both the experience and causes of poor walking conditions in winter cities. To explore these topics in Winnipeg, professors Gina Sylvestre and Nora Casson, from the Department of Geography at the University of Winnipeg, are conducting a unique social-physical science partnership study. Using their website, people in Winnipeg can provide information about walking surfaces that they experience. The website collects information that includes rating the level of walking difficulty, descriptions of snow clearing, ice and snow conditions that create barriers to walking, as well as basic information about a walker's physical ability and frequency of winter walking. "Using this innovative 'citizen science' data collection method allows us to create a large dataset across the city, while engaging Winnipeggers in the issue of winter walkability," says Sylvestre.

"The goal of the study is to better understand the relationship between winter-walking conditions and weather conditions, to help policy makers decide how and when to deploy limited snow clearing resources."

To learn more or take part in the survey visit:

<http://geography.uwinnipeg.ca/winterwalk.htm>
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parks, neighbourhoods or commercial areas. Essentially, the concept involves designing environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptations.

Whether a particular environment meets the requirements of universal design can be determined by applying the 8 to 80 rule. Think of an older adult. Think of a child. Would you send them out together for a walk to the park? If yes, then the space meets the 8 to 80 rule, and almost everyone in our city will have his or her mobility needs met.

Other examples of universal design include automatic doors in buildings and signage that includes pictures and words. Universal design can also be applied to street design. Cities across Canada and the United States are embracing this concept as they think differently about how people move, rather than how cars move. "Complete Streets" is a universal design approach that recognizes the movement needs of young families, older adults and people with disabilities. A complete street provides all of us with mobility options. Components of a complete street include:

- Connectivity – sidewalks and paths connect to

each other and provide access to destinations.

- Inclusive sidewalk experience – benches to rest, accessible transit stops, and free of obstacles.
- Elevation change support – curb cuts and ramps assist people to manoeuvre inclines and declines.
- Lower vehicle speeds – the use of traffic-calming measures such as reducing the number of lanes, reducing lane widths and use of speed bumps or humps.
- Safer crossings – allowing people more time to cross at stoplights or signalized crossings, decreased crossing distances and frequent crossings.

An environment that supports the highest attainable health is a human right. This includes ensuring that everyone in our city has equitable access to moving around our city in a safe, enjoyable and affordable way. Transportation options for all, including those with a disability or other mobility limitation, improves the health of our city by connecting citizens, providing access to amenities, and supporting diversity.

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